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# OIL PALM NEWS



“  
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in our congregation  
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in growing oil palm,..  
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OIL PALM NEWS





# Early Bird Farmer Count Profits from Oil Palm Fruits



Steven Isabirye at his home which he wishes to improve into a better one soon after earning from his oil palm garden.

Steven Isabirye (right) looking at how the residents who paid him a visit were admiring his fruiting oil palm plant.

Steven Isabirye commonly known as Japan by residents of Kiteredde village in Buwooya sub-county, Buvuma district planted an oil palm plantation of four acres in July 2021. He embraced the idea following the government's sensitization campaign about the importance of taking part in the out-growing after the project was introduced in the district. On top of being among the first batch of out growers, his land responds superlatively to the plant in terms of smooth growth given its strategic location under the valley enabling it to collect enough water from the hilly areas.

Besides, Isabirye also takes good care of his farm as the rest of the farmers who planted at the same time start to see their trees bearing fruits, he is now at the level of monitoring improvement of the kernel which is the stone in the middle of the fruit. He surprises almost everyone by producing cooking oil he squeezes from the fleshy fruit picked from his garden. Such oil is used at his home for cooking but also sells some to his neighbours in

the community. "As we wait for the investor to set up the mill, I cannot let these mature fruits dry in the garden. I decided to pick them and add value to them by producing oil we can use in the community. Residents have started to pick interest in buying it from me. I am thinking about expanding this project as well to transform my daily earnings," Isabirye reveals. His hope to construct a better house lies within the garden; "Look at where I stay, at any point my shelter can be blown away by strong winds. It is hard to convince visitors that it is a house accommodating over six people, what I call a house can even be torn down by any fierce animal," he says emphasizing the primary goal once he starts a bulky harvest. According to him, his children are still young and also required to get the best education.

He believes with the long-term harvest period; they will complete their university education, a nightmare to most of the parents in the islands. Mature oil palms (3-4 years old) can be harvested for 20-25 years, providing farmers with a steady monthly income as ripe fruits are harvested every 10 days. Therefore, an oil palm tree bears fruit at four years and if well nurtured, it can be harvested at least thrice a month thereafter.



# Connecting Buvuma: How Oil Palm Growing Improved Buvuma Road Network



Ronald Odalo, an out-grower.

Ronald Odalo, a truck driver in the Buvuma district significantly established a plantation of oil palm trees on 5 acres of land despite the great hurdle of the poor road network he had to face carrying the seedlings to the last corner of the garden. After transporting the seedlings from the nursery bed at Buwangwe to a vehicle - friendly user section near the garden, Odalo hired bodaboda riders to make the final deliveries of seedlings in the garden.

Much as the process turned out expensive, he was still encouraged by the aspiration to set clear ground for educating his children in higher institutions of learning, construct a good house as well as establishing a regular income base. Thanks to the public-private investments in roads at Buvuma Main Island, Odalo would still struggle to transport farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.

“Grading roads within my garden did not only bring life to it but also improved trade within the community....”

Furthermore, as he nears the first harvest period, he would still find it hard to carry palm oil fruit bunches from the garden. The government together with Buvuma Oil Palm Uganda Limited (BOPUL) graded roads connecting different areas where oil palm is grown as well as routes within big gardens to ease movement. “Grading roads within my garden did not only bring life to it but also improved trade within the community.

They are also benefiting coffee, maize and banana dealers. Roads alone have made the majority appreciate the introduction of oil palm growing in Buvuma district,” Odalo emphasizes. Odalo is not the only grateful resident, several other farmers have received the same assistance from roads throughout their gardens. Alternative routes connecting to the main roads have also eased movement, especially for traders and travelers within the entire district.

An agro-dealer, Joseph Kosolo says they almost gave up on buying crops during the rainy season due to the slippery and impassibility of roads at Buvuma. “Less has always been done by our district leaders to improve them. It requires support from residents to push your motorcycle loaded with produce in various sections,” Kasolo says.

A resident at Buvuma Fauza Nakisige says the situation could be worthwhile to pregnant mothers and patients traveling for medical attention at Buvuma Health Center IV, as more complications could arise during times of referral especially when rushing to find the ferry at Kironko landing site. Isa Mbooge, the Chief Administrative Officer of Buvuma district is grateful to BOPUL for creating alternative roads and bypasses close to the main road which he says are helping people have options for dangerous stretches on government roads.





Poor roads used to be one of the challenges that affected Buvuma.

The project's greatest funder, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) together with the government secured a new ferry (MV Palm) for the district plying the route of Kiyindi to Kirongo landing sites at sh12.5bn. The vessel came at a time when farmers at Buvuma and Bulkwe were crying foul over the failure to transport their goods and produce such as bananas, coffee, maize, tomatoes, and beans to markets due to delays by the old ferry which had

started developing rampant mechanical breakdowns forcing the management to reduce the number of routes from four to two.

Currently, Buvuma is having one of the biggest ferries in Uganda, MV Palm which eased the transport system to and from the islands. The ferry plies at least a maximum of four routes on busiest days like Monday and Friday and three on the rest of the days.



Ronald Odalo (second left) and others passing through one of the access roads which was worked up on to ease transport to and through his oil palm plantations.





# Farmer Finds Palm Oil Garden Easy to Control from Diseases

“

Oil palm growing came as opportunity for me to continue aging gracefully. Seeing them bearing bunches of fruits gives me hope that one day I will construct a better house....

”

Stress free Rose Namuyimbwa speaking with a smile as she looks at the progress from her palm oil plantation.

A 60-year-old Rose Namuyimbwa of Nakiwadde village in Buvuma district had lost hope in farming following the recurrent damages caused by a lethal fungal bacterial wilt disease affecting his banana garden. Notwithstanding the removal and replanting of the new garden, every season would remain the same.

Amidst the state of such confusion, Namuyimbwa received the good news of palm oil growing and the attached support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Enthusiastically, she embraced the project with open arms, now operating a garden of three acres under Bukwaya Unit. She employs two workers to support her in maintaining the garden.

She has discovered the secret of intercropping her garden with fast-growing foods such as cassava, potatoes, and beans. “Before planting the palm oil trees I had to clear the entire garden, possibly this contributed to the reduction of the fungal disease within the soil, look at the palm trees, they are healthy, but also the fast-growing crops within the same garden have amazing yields,” Namuyimbwa

says. Just to visit her home, the seemingly aged lady mastered the art of bringing out the visitor’s book for registration. Talk about the garden, she has another book for farm input records. “I have learned to maintain records of people I associate with but also what is injected in my garden, starting from what I spend on workers, and fertilizers applied to the palm trees besides recording changes in their growing process,” she further explains.

Namuyimbwa confesses that the palm oil garden is easy to control compared to the banana plantation which had almost compelled her to cry out of anxiety and depression looking at her banana plantation yellowing almost every leaf before hanging around the pseudostem and eventually wither.

“Oil palm growing came as an opportunity for me to continue aging gracefully. Seeing them bearing bunches of fruits gives me hope that one day I will construct a better house, modern toilet, expand my piggery farm, and as well establish commercial houses,” Namuyimbwa reveals her dream.





# Church Hopeful in Reducing Collection of Offertories Through Oil Palm Harvests



Rev. Brian Kiggundu speaking during an interview.

The Church of Uganda's Buvuma Island Missionary Parish contemplates the reduction of collecting unending baskets for offertories and other development projects, one of the things which burdens the Christians. The hope to have this come to pass only lies in the progress of the harvests of oil palm fruits, the venture which the church has passionately engaged into.

The Church is among the institutions that undertook the project of oil palm growing in Buvuma district at an estate of 30 acres established in September 2021 in Nairambi sub-county.

Despite an earlier strong resistance and bad attitude from the congregation of the island district, the then Mukono Diocesan Bishop, James William Ssebaggala insisted on implementing the project which was later cherished by his successor, the Bp. Enos Kitto Kagodo. Buvuma Island Missionary Parish Priest Rev. Brian Kiggundu anticipates interdependence on the project from raising funds in the congregation alone to running God's ministry. "Currently the church depends on the congregation alone to facilitate missionary activities which is slightly hard for us to achieve planned activities since also its wellbeing requires extra-economic transformation," Rev. Kiggundu says.





Ivan Ssekubunga, a lay reader.

The church at Buvuma is in a dire state to purchase its water vessel to transport God's ministers to preach the gospel at scattered islands. Buvuma district is made up of 52 scattered islands whose people need a spiritual approach.

Also, the church intends to establish hostels for visitors in the islands, expand the church building as well construct St Peter's Church of Uganda Primary School which is located at the parish headquarters at Walwanda in Buvuma town-council which is currently lacking structures.

The school presently conducts classes under tree shades at Buvuma town council. Rev. Kiggundu reveals that as of now, the church, specifically the Mukono diocese, meets all the costs of maintaining the garden in terms of labour. It only receives farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides from the government. Its plants have now reached the phase of fruiting. Ivan Ssekubunga, a lay reader who also doubles as the church oil palm farm manager says the project helped them evict on top of scaring away encroachers on land. Almost the entire church oil palm farm land had been encroached on. Ssekubunga who was at the forefront of establishing the garden says at the initial stage Christians dissented from the idea but have now started to come on board.

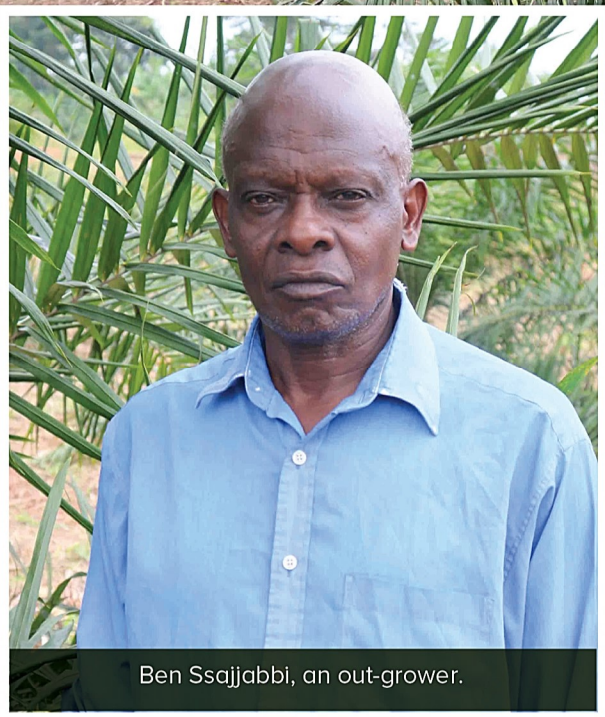
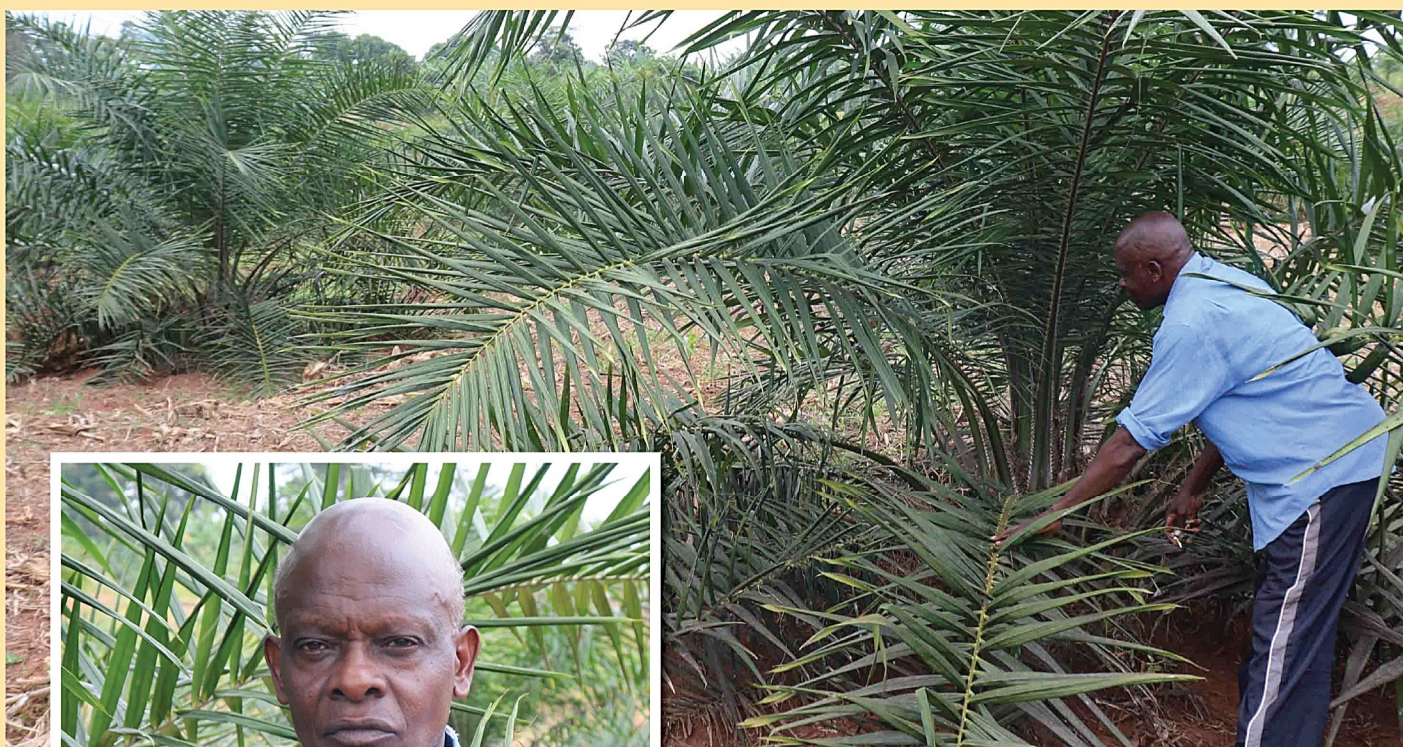
"So far, members in our congregation have picked interest in growing oil palm, at the start of the project, many had even abandoned the church in disagreement with the bishop's decision to grow oil palm trees. The phase at which they have reached has encouraged many to change their attitude towards the project," Ssekubunga says.

A teacher at Namakeba Primary School adjacent to the garden, Racheal Isiko says the school is using the plantation as a demonstration garden to change parents' attitudes towards loving oil palm growing. "Majority of parents with children in our school possess idle land they can use to grow oil palm and transform their wellbeing soon but their attitude has been negative," Isiko says.





# Oil Palm Growing Breathed Back Life into Abandoned Garden



Ben Ssajjabbi, an out-grower.

**“Regardless of what was promised to us as farm supplements, these are our gardens, and we ought to jealously care for them....”**

Ben Ssajjabbi had given up on his 20 - acre banana plantation located at Bukwaya in Buvuma district. Despite investing a lot of energy in it and money, the garden could only earn him close to sh450,000 annually. Besides, its location could attract floods whenever it rained heavily affecting further the financial outcomes.

Thanks to the Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for introducing oil palm growing in the district, the once abandoned plantation turned into one of the

most admired palm gardens in the area. Located along the main road, makes it rare for the passerby to go without casting a look at the fruiting trees.

“I started planting in 2021 after taking part in the out-growers sensitization meetings aimed at introducing us to the importance of oil palm growing and how it can transform our communities. Little sense by then, but what choice did I have, I took part in the exercise which has now brought a smile to my face,” Ssajjabbi recounts.





Ben Ssajjabbi showing one of his palm oil plants which has already started bearing fruits.



“According to him, it has not been an easy journey to maintain the garden, especially at the planting stage where he was shocked by heavy drought and termites cutting the seedlings at the stem. The situation worsened when the promised support from IFAD was slightly delayed to maintain the garden.

IFAD promised to support farmers with sh2.5m for maintaining the gardens annually with a restriction to five acres only, and other farm inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides for vector disease control and crop losses. Nonetheless, Ssajjabbi has lived to sacrifice the earnings from his 8-acre garden intercropped with banana, cassava, and cocoa to maintain the palm oil plantation.

Regardless of what was promised to us as farm supplements, these are our gardens, and we ought to jealously care for them. I treat the rest as additional, supposedly, I had to wait for the maintainer, it comes quarterly and I have only received twice, the money which amounts to sh1.3m since starting the garden in 2022. How would my garden look like if I had given up on it as if I am working for someone?” he wonders.

Given his nomadic background of life, Ssajjabbi has hoped every after harvest to save and invest in modern cattle farming as well as goats. Educate his five grandchildren in good schools on the mainland, buy more land to establish extra palm oil gardens, and also construct commercial houses with the target of supplementing his monthly income.



# Unemployed Youth Finds Solace in Oil Palm Growing



**Awari Kampaya standing beside an oil palm plant in their garden.**

One of the youths is Awari Kampaya, 29, convinced by her mother Zabiina Takoberwa, 63, to settle back at their home located at Kiteredde village in Buwooya sub-county to take care of an oil palm garden. Kampaya had spent much of his time in Jinja and Buikwe districts looking for employment opportunities but in vain.

For all his efforts, his quest instead hit a snag when he received a call from his mother back home. “My mother asked me to prevail over the management of the garden for soon could help both of us improve our wellbeing. Hoping we shall construct a better house as well as invest in a possible opportunity to raise a daily income.

It was not a simple decision for me to take but here we are now, palm oil trees have started to shed a glimmer of hope...fruiting,” he notes. Takoberwa who also doubles as the Kiteredde Oil Palm Unit Treasurer established a garden of approximately 2.5 acres managed by his son. She has hopes of expanding their garden after profiting from the first seasons.

She appeals to the government to expedite the process of providing maintenance fees to them to keep their gardens clean. “It was easy for my son to manage the garden alone when we had just planted the seedlings but now, each tree requires a lot of time and energy to do the required circle weeding,”

Takoberwa reveals, adding that his son also finds it hard to weed the garden without protective gears which were also promised to be given to them but they are yet to be delivered. She nonetheless appreciates his son for listening to her and agreeing to carry the mantle of managing the garden.

She appeals to the government to sensitize idle youths about the importance of farming specifically about oil palm growing.



**Zabiina Takoberwa, the mother to Awari Kampaya.**

Despite a simple stage of fruiting, oil palm growing has already given reassurance and relaxation to various youths in the Buvuma district who have for many years grappled to find occupancy that provides them with a regular income.




# Oil Palm Garden is My Pension Kalema

“

I decided to venture into oil palm growing due to the long-term harvest period I learned it provides. The phase at which my garden has reached, I look at it as my pension for old age...

”



Lawrence Kalema, an out-grower in his garden.

The fallouts of failure to save for your retirement can play out in numerous ways, yet subtle, ways. The consequences aren't always calamitous but they're always wretched. Regardless of old age, some continue to engage in part-time jobs and some others move into their children's homes to afford various bills of life. Also, failure to save enough for retirement kills dreams, creates fear, torture, and depression, something which can lead to early death. The above was Lawrence Kalema's strongest fear in life until the introduction of oil palm growing in Buvuma district.

The 60-year-old Kalema speaks about his oil palm garden with plenty of joy, like a civil servant expects a pension after clocking the retirement age, Kalema says his garden is his pension. "Leaving in this country expecting no pension or any equivalence was a serious nightmare. I decided to venture into oil palm growing due to the long-term harvest period I learned it provides. The phase at which my garden has reached, I look at it as my pension for old age," he says. Kalema planted five acres of oil palm trees with each acre comprising 60 trees at Lukale village in Nairambi sub-county. He also uses the same garden to grow

fast-growing foods such as potatoes and cassava. Also in his food crops garden, Kalema borrowed a leaf from an oil palm garden to plant seeds in rows. He has applied this to tomatoes, maize, and beans. He says it makes it easy for him to access crops, irrigate, weed them as well as harvest. The introduction of oil palm growing is slowly turning us into model farmers in our communities, at first, fellow residents used to call us 'out-goers' instead of 'out-growers'. The interpretation was that the project we had resorted to would fail and the situation forces us to sell our land to go out of the islands.

Unlike in the past, Kalema says oil palm growing unites families and communities. He says the entire family is required to keep around and learn from extension workers how to do circle weeding and application of fertilizers, things they wish to by themselves in future after gaining experience. Nonetheless, Kalema also points out some shortfalls despite the great love for his garden and these include less and delayed garden maintenance fees as well as expeditious provision of their ledger cards for proper calculation of their loans incurred in farm inputs.



# Oil Palm Out Growers Project Saved School Land from Encroachers



Deo Miir0 Mpiiso deputy board chairperson for Buvuma College



Robinah Nakakande, Deputy Headteacher Buvuma College School.

Buvuma College School ventured into oil palm cultivation establishing a ten-acre garden dubbed 'Buvuma College Oil Palm Out-Growers School Project' at Majjo village in Nairambi sub-county, Buvuma district. The project adjacent to the school has already solved the prolonged challenge of land grabbers and potential grabbers intending to seize further and possess the idle school land. The project was suggested by the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) which agreed that the school Board of Governors (BOG) take on the responsibility of managing the garden. Initially, the institute had 50 acres of land comprising the school structures and the garden but according to Deo Mpiiso Miir0, the Vice Chairperson at the school board, about twelve acres had been encroached on. Miir0 says the school board managed to reclaim ten acres where they planted oil palm trees in 2021. Currently, they are still before the High Court pending judgment and an order seeking to repossess the other part of the encroached land.

The scheme to grow oil palm is aimed at improving the school standards of living starting from the diet of students and staff once the harvest kicks off. The school management is looking at constructing hostels affordable to parents at Buvuma to encourage more learners from scattered islands who cannot afford to cross the lake daily to join for secondary education. Besides, teachers are also still finding it difficult to access accommodation, the management hopes to construct good teacher's quarters but also improve teachers' welfare, specifically private teachers. Miir0 says the government delays release and when it does, it is fewer capitation grants to enable development at the school, he adds that such a situation has left the school in a critical dire need for many years.

He appeals to the government to expedite the process of streamlining funding of out-growers with gardens above five acres. "The arrangement was made for only farmers with five acres and below. Owners of the gardens above are suffering to maintain the gardens on their own. Here the school management and the board have struggled to meet the costs of labour since the planting of oil palm trees," Miir0 reveals. Nonetheless, the Deputy Head Teacher, Robinah Nakakande says the school is not only happy at the phase upon which the oil palm trees have reached but also has helped learners especially those in the agriculture classes to experiment with what they study in the new curriculum. "Whenever extension workers are here to support us and apply fertilizers, we ensure involving learners to master the process. The knowledge gained here is also transferred back home in their parent's gardens during holidays and they have supported them so much," Nakakande says.

